



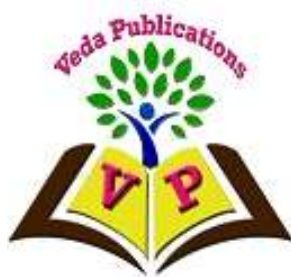
## ROLE OF WOMAN FOR FAMILY CONSTRUCTION IN CAROLESHIELDS :HAPPENSTANCE

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### ABSTRACT



Family is the basic unit of society. Man and woman unite to form a family for the purpose of the propagation and the nourishment of human life. It is the universal law that the male and the female elements in nature, when they unite, have the potential to create life of its own kind. This union of the male and a female element to produce life is a great mystery. The union of man and woman, with the intention to live together and to generate new life, is called marriage it has two elements, one individual and other social. Man and woman should mutually agree, of their own free will, to unite, which is the individual element in marriage. Marriage is just the beginning of a permanent relationship where man and woman resolve to live together till death, even after their primary duty and the main function of marriage, i.e. bringing up children, is over.

And the mother is always more devoted to the children, more unselfish and more self-sacrificing by nature. The essential functions of giving birth and nourishing the child with her own milk only the mother can do. So society, from times immemorial, has always appreciated woman's essential service as mother to human society, and has always given her great honour and respect. Through this paper, I would like to discuss Carole Shields Woman Protagonists Exploration for self-identity and woman psychology being a wife in marital relationship, and also focuses on man-woman relationship, the most significant theme of Canadian fiction.

**Keywords:** *Woman Role, Quest for identity, Marital relationship, Mother Role in family construction.*

**INTRODUCTION**

A Happy marriage has in it all the pleasures of friendship, all the enjoyment of sense and reason and indeed all the sweetness of life" (1).

---Joseph Addison.

Man-woman relationship is no more passive and silent. It becomes bold enough to face the challenges in life. In order to achieve economic independence and self-hood, her characters can deplore all kinds of morality and ethics of society truly speaking; man-woman relationship is the many things to many people. It is reflection of human mind that is conscious equilibrium of human soul and psyche. It is the sentimental outcome of plus-and-minus affair of human mind as well as human body. Any affair in entire world cannot burst the bonds without man-woman relationship. On that account, it is the potent weapon in the hands of creative men of letter. In view of the fact that it invites tenders, the way towards human by searching pains and pleasures. Hence, it comes forward the genesis to the literature.

It plays distinguished role in human life, is as precious as that of diamond in a garland. Life would lose its delicious taste without man-woman relationship. It places at our disposal the vital breath to new life and ideal mind for healthy and wealthy humanity. Marriage is a sacred union between the male and female, they should attach to each other spiritually and emotionally. It shows that our tradition always gave the primacy to women even in matter of religion. But in the later stage, due to various influences, this tradition of honouring women turned into one of enslavement of women. But it increases the responsibilities of a woman as she has to perform a lot of different roles after her marriage, and it is a bondage between two different sexes that needs to reflect social changes which are impossible to have, urbanization and education. And women as persons are defined by the fixity of their age-old role. So, the feminine self needs to be recognized in this married relationship. The theology of every religion recognizes the importance of woman and the crucial role that woman plays in the organization of society. Every religion assures woman great dignity as wife.

Woman, she is given pride of place in its liturgy and worship.

Carol Ann Warner, later called on the name of Carole Shields, was born in June on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1935, Oak Park, at Illinois, situated in United States. Though she born in U.S after her marriage with Donald Shields, she spent her remaining life in different places like Ottawa and Toronto in Canada. She died because of Cancer decease, in July 16, 2003, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Carole Shields is an American-born Canadian author whose work explores the lives of ordinary people. Domestic life and the way everyday people appear and how they relate to one another is a persistent theme in Shields's fiction. Shields depict the careful, contented lives of the middle class, expertly evoking their feelings and concerns.

Her characters do face the ordinary days of home life, often devoted to family and home; her repeated explorations of the lives of women in traditional internal situations have led some critics to suggest that, her work is lacking feminist force or meaning. Shields's fiction, however, espouses the feminist message that transcendence for women can be found in meaningful work. Shields has published over twenty publications in almost all types of literary genres ranging from novels, poems and plays, while raising five children. It can be observed that her novels have been influenced by both the literary movements of the time, as well as by her own life's experiences, moving across continents and countries. Her consideration of women's work is increasingly evident in her novels that span more than twenty years, demonstrating the influence of various feminist theorists, such as Betty Friedan and de Beauvoir.

Carole Shields in her novel *Happenstance* magnificently narrated the Man and Woman relationship and mainly a woman role in marital relationship and family construction. Carol Ann Shields *Happenstance* 1980, which is more firmly, enunciates a cyclical feminist theme. This is the unusual format of containing two books in one novel. Jack Bowman and Brenda Bowman both are main protagonists Jack is as introspective as Brenda and both are more practical. Carol Shields focuses on differences between male and female thoughts.



These two unique companion novels tell the stories of Jack and Brenda Bowman during a rare time apart in their many years of marriage. In *The Husband's Story* originally published in 1980 as *Happenstance*, Jack is at home coping with domestic crises and two uncouth adolescents while immobilized by self-doubt and questioning his worth as a historian, The theme of class privilege in *Happenstance*, particularly as it contributes to the stasis of Jack Bowman.

He feels tender of guilt and fear when he considers the easy of his life as a historian compared with the lives of the men in the 'work gangs tearing up the streets' down town. And this husband's part of the novel explains what happens at home while she's away, from the viewpoint of the husband. In *The Wife's Story* originally published in 1982 as *A Fairly Conventional Woman*, Brenda, She is at 40 years just discovering herself. She leaves home for a week quilting conference, traveling alone for the first time to a strange city Philadelphia, an eminent city for quilting designs and its culture. so it had occupied noticeable place in Brenda's famous quilting designs and she recognised her quilts were changing. The birds, flowers, boats and houses of her early designs, "what Leah Wallberg called her folkly thing- was giving way to something more abstract. The shapes interlocked in different more complex, ways." (TWS-17). Brenda started her journey from Chicago to Philadelphia with an array of emotions and lot of excitement of her professional identity satisfaction, the trip to Philadelphia and ensuing conference are steps in a rising crescendo of personal expansion and development, as Brenda's work exposes her to a world of new ideas.

Mainly this novel has been a profound portrait of a marriage and of those differences between the sexes that brings life - and a sense of isolation - into the most loving relationships. In the following lines Carole Shields expressed her feelings about the word *Happenstance* and why she choose that particular word to her novel in one interview with Winnipeg Radio.

Well happenstance is a strange word. It means half chance, half circumstance I think. I think really most of us are the people we are by chance. We don't write our own script I suppose is what

I'm saying. We can't really blame all the forces around us – our parents and our happy or unhappy childhood – for the way we turn out. I think it's all a matter of chance or happenstance. –(Winnipeg Radio- 2, 1981 Transcription of audio tape).

As above mentioned interview, Shields wants to convey her views through the word *Happenstance* it means that - life's situations which may either correct or in- correct for both men and women.

Through Carole Shields intellectual narration *Happenstance*, she exhibit the different ways that men and women behave in Marriage transition, a psychological behaviour between the couples. Both the male and the female partners are equally responsible for the upbringing of their children.

In a broad sense we can say that not only love but also appreciation, help, confidence, cooperation and respect for women are needed to make a marriage successful. One of the most significant psychosocial adjustments in adulthood is the transition to marriage. Although most men and women in the western part of the country will marry at some point in their lives and most look forward to this event with anticipation and excitement, the transition to marriage also involves adaptation to a variety of tasks that may fundamentally alter spouses' view of themselves and their alliances. During the first few years of marriage, spouses typically define new roles, which may be less individualistic and more interdependent; alter their social networks; and establish a core alliance with each other rather than with their families of origin.

Couples succeed or fail in making the transition to a stable, satisfying marriage, identify behaviours that put couples at risk for marital problems and behaviours that protect them from marital distress and divorce, discuss the impact of external stressors, and identify the changes that individuals may experience in making the transition to marriage. Most researchers find that in happily married couples, a general decline in marital satisfaction occurs naturally. Therefore, some researchers have argued that disillusionment is an inevitable process as couples begin the transition



from dating to newlywed marriage to early marriage, and therefore cannot be a useful explanatory model because it occurs for distressed as well as happily married couples.

The novel *Happenstance* starts with couple's separation for five days in the lives of husband Jack and wife Brenda Bowman, they got married 20 years ago, and Brenda wants to change her isolated life with this marriage. One year past in her life, she has been struck with a sudden wish to freeze herself in time and announce to herself. In the following lines Brenda has explained her daily routine household things being a wife in the house.

Here I am, Brenda Bowman, sitting at a pine kitchen table, filling out my tax form, here I am forty years old, the mother of two children, the wife of a historian, sitting on the edge of my bed applying tawny nail polish at three o'clock in the afternoon. My name is Brenda Mary Pulaski Bowman. I am forty years old, it is eleven-thirty at night, and I am engaged in act of sexual intercourse, the act of love, with a man call Jack Bowman". (TWS -86).

As she stated in the lines she wants to be main part in her house. But to gain her self-identity in the family and society, she adopted her mother's quilt making art.

Brenda Bowman in *Happenstance* found herself an artist when she turned forty, when nothing in her life had prepared her for that role. And soon she became a prominent quilt maker in her city Illinois, in Chicago the city which is famous for quilt makers, so Brenda also soon became a famed figure with her quilt making art and she rediscovered her identity through the art of professional quilting. Because of Brenda's well-known quilt works she was invited, on the strength of her newly discovered talent as a quilt maker, to spend a week at a craft convention. In twenty years of their marriage, they have hardly ever been apart, and then It is her first trip away from her Chicago home and, removed from familiar routines and surroundings, Brenda is ending one phase of her life and another phrase is going to begin any how her kids and husband aren't dependent on her for house hold things. She felt

both anxious and adventurous about her first time alone trip away from the home.

Jack Bowman is an historian but stayed at home in the absence of his wife and coping with domestic crises and two uncouth adolescents while immobilized by self-doubt and questioning his worth as an historian. And he is a son of aging parents; he loved his father and mother, who lived only a few miles away. They loved him too abundantly, although Jack acknowledged that their love, like all parental love, was composed of a number of darker feelings. He is a happy and a fortunate man pure happenstance made him into a man without serious Impairment or unspeakable losses. He was married to Brenda and he thought that how many marriages had lasted as long as theirs? He had only to look around him to see how rare that was.

"My children were reasonably normal. Reasonably: so far at least they'd remained untouched by drugs, shoplifting, truancy, and other adolescent ills he read about every day in the paper. (THS-10).

Jack is loyal and so are Brenda and they both have the same romantic idea of their shared domestic situation; delighting in its simplicity and its mark of adulthood. Carole Shields designed the Jack's character with her soft corner towards men so she expressed her feelings on men in the further down lines.

I do love good men, and have had a number of them in my life. Men deserve novelistic space. And good marriages - how rare, they are - can help us from blaming men. I do not believe that men wake up every morning and think: How can I oppress women today? They are as caught up as we are in our assigned roles - but they have power and we don't. --- (Carole Shields - Interview May10, 2002, Bookreporter.com).

At the time of Brenda's absence in the home he managed everything about the home-based things. Carole with in her one Interview She admired the men roles in marital relationships in her novels in the below lines:



I wrote the books because I was curious about how men's lives have changed in response to the new gender thinking. It seemed to me that it was hard to be a man these days, new comportments to learn, new definitions of masculinity to be absorbed, compromises to reflect upon. --- (Carole Shields Interview With Donna Krolik Hollenberg- in 1998).

In this interview she stated about the men condition and the masculine psychology towards life. Shields mentioned the couple's problems as pared down to the most inevitable of things: losing parents, rearing offspring, struggling to forge connections, processing one's own impending mortality. Carole Shields' handling of universal hurdles is remarkable. No flashy plotlines, no distracting postmodern pretensions, just clear, crisp realist prose with a few brilliant dips into surrealist imagery. Following lines are said by the Publishers Weekly,

As Shields handily demonstrates here, a marriage is the culmination of a million tiny moments, and she strings them together with intense cumulative power- Publishers weekly (1984).

The stage of marriage is mentioned in the above lines through the point of view of shields. Carole Shields choose language carefully. In remembering the one moment in their marriage when she felt a lapse of love, Brenda reflects that she had been assailed by a freak visitation, and preserved the knowledge that it could happen again. In a human life particularly in woman's life the marriage comes with a lot of changes. Brenda succeed in profession and got her self-identity as an independent famous quilt personality in the society, but at the time of Jack and Brenda's one week separation she wanted complete freedom from her routine everyday things.

So she enjoyed the concern of other man called Barry Ollershaw, an metallurgist attended for a conference and stayed in the same hotel with Brenda, she wanted his presence with her, not for physical interest but to come out from her loneliness

at a new place. Though she attracted to a new man Brenda never forget her loving Husband and children.

for the first time she got independent freedom when she was being away from her house, and she became enough courageous women to look after her who can give food orders without her husband's sustenance. Brenda as she expected surpass freedom for some time at the time of her presence in Philadelphia quilt conference, want to escape from her status of spouse to Jack. Brenda becomes increasingly intimate with a kind man attending a metallurgists' convention, whose life reveals to her the variety of arrangements people make in their marriages. She moved close with that metallurgist called Barry Ollershaw who is already married, but departed from his wife Ruth, and daughter, and he maintained many physical affairs with different woman like divorced woman, a younger woman to him, and with a girl at golf play, and with his secretary, in his life. He told Brenda he wasn't much good as an adulterer.

But Brenda has never been unfaithful to Jack in twenty years of marriage she has never once been unfaithful. She never considered having an affair with either Dr. Middleton, Director of the Great Lake institute at her old work place, Bernie Koltz, who loved Brenda for long time, or the travel photographer whose name she never discovered. Brenda loved and trusted Jack, she knew all the crises and odours of his body, she was grateful and a little owed by his fidelity, many of the couples she and Jack knew were unfaithful to each other, but not they. Now for the first time she felt she had stepped in to faithlessness after meeting with Barry Ollershaw but that was not for sex at all, but novelty, risk and possibility. Brenda had enjoyed her time with Barry in Philadelphia he loved her and spent his time with her; they both went for shopping, visiting many famous places in the city and both were always drowned in alcohol. Once in philosophical mood Barry expressed his love to Brenda.

"I suppose love comes in waves. Like sound waves, light waves and everything nature. Blowing hot or cold .On again and off again" (TWS-180).

On one day Brenda and Barry were engaged in the discussions about their individual marital



relationships with their partners Jack and Ruth. Brenda loved Her husband a lot but in some situations she was not satisfied with him, marital fidelity had become a thing of the past, the word itself antique and as embarrassing as certain companion words like husband and household, and the Barry is also had in the same condition But consciously they never wanted to make physical relationship, unconsciously and accidentally with their tiredness they both were laid on the same bed.

when they moved apart in sleep and shifted in to different positions. Barry's lips brushed Brenda's ear, and he said to her "I do love you" (TWS-194). Brenda also said "I love you too" (TWS-194). Hear we can imagine the woman psychology seeking love and companionship from men her, attitude exposed as the wicked woman nature with the impact of her surrounding social conditions in Philadelphia and western countries.

On the next day Brenda reached to Chicago as a successful award winner of best quilter, she find her identity in the society and enjoyed her freedom as an individual and reunited to her husband Jack, Making new friends, fending off the amorous advances of a handsome metallurgist, and coming to terms with her celebrity status as a prize winning crafts woman, Brenda feels things are changing fast. As the week progresses all the gathering emotions which have unsettled her life over the last few years- the sudden and inexplicable attacks of sadness and anger, the feelings of insecurity are brought into focus by Brenda's point of view through her side. Brenda said to Jack in the dark "I've missed you" (TWS-197) Jack replied "I missed you terribly" (TWS-197). The Brenda of old used to be smiling and matter- of-fact, but now she has a restless anger and a sense of undelivered messages.

Things go wrong fast--dizziness, for starters-- and after an affair with an engineer and some sitcom, she returns home and feels, for a moment, the Brenda of old, a self that is curiously, childishly brave. Shields explore relationships within the home whether they are familial bonds between mothers and daughters, parents and children or the relationship between a man and a woman. Her women characters believe the conformity and compromise for the sake of continuity of the

domestic harmony. Of course they are not heroic, yet they can understand their inner strength as modern women and strive to make their self-identity in a better way, in the midst of all known restrictions. These women characters are following their unremitting assertion of individuality, and turning their path towards the gradual and steadily changing position. Identity for a woman can never be static but bound by her relations, transforming as they transform in this way that she is born as a daughter, grows up to be a wife and ages as the mother. Regarding this Dr. M.S Pawar, stated her feelings in the book *New Women Novelists With New horizons*(2011),

The problem as identified was that woman's identity was expected to be merged with and grow from her role as wife and mother, female children grew up with indoctrination that held up, overtly and covertly, this ideal as the only one a 'good' woman was to aspire for; and they believed that it was this cultural conditioning that was the culprit, (p-40).

It is women's nature that they are always trying to conserve, adapt rather than destroy and build everything anew. They prefer compromise and adjustment to revolution. However, these attitudes are not dictated to woman by her hormones but they are inculcated in her by her situation and as the result of her economic, social and historical conditioning. And the fact is that what is conditioned by society can also be changed as Simone De Beauvoir opines, "Let the future be opened to her and she will no longer cling desperately to the past. When women are called upon for concrete action; when they recognize their interest in the designated goals, they are as bold and courageous as men" (614). Identity for a woman can never be static but bound by her relations, transforming as they transform in this way that she is born as a daughter, grows up to be a wife and ages as the mother.

Carole Shields visualised the psychological condition of her few women characters in the novel *Happenstance* like Brenda's mother Elsa Pulaski gave a birth to a child without marriage, Brenda bowman fatherless girl, faithful wife to her husband but



expected extended freedom and fascinated by a new man but finally syndicate with her family .Carole Shields In her writings, she reflects a realistic picture of contemporary middle-class women. She focuses on women's issues and she has a women's perspective on the world. Shields's fictional forte is the exploration of the psyche of women. Her feminism sometimes seems a little "uncertain" because it is not anti-male. However, Shields is firm in her conviction that particularly in Western societies, feminism cannot be 'anti-male' since both man and woman have to communicate and work towards a better, more meaningful, companionable relationship. Carole Shields matured Social awareness made her to write on the man-woman relationship which has led to her analysis of the institution of marriage in this age of transition.

Analysing it from, Shields points out the uneasiness of a woman in the established role which expects her to be an embodiment of scarification of woman's self-identity, and she portrayed the woman as monument of devotion and patience. *Happenstance* really a kind of tact, an emotional and artistic economy that isolates, identifies in Shields work and moral lives. Human beings really don't have to do everything, just because everything is possible, Shields came to the happy conclusion in the novel *Happenstance*, a woman leaving her marital relationship in search of freedom, but the definition of the freedom is be broadened to include ties of loyalty and love.

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